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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 18th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 20 October 2003, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman*: Ms. Londoño (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Colombia)

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Agenda item 113: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

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03-56730 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 3:15 p.m.*

**Agenda item 113: Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (A/58/272, A/58/282, A/58/328, A/58/329 and A/58/420)

1. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that October marked the end of the second tranche and the beginning of the three-year extension of his mandate. In his report (A/58/328), he had outlined the progress that had been made to date and the constraints that had been encountered. The report also proposed an agenda for action for the following three years.

2. Important, tangible progress had been made during the past five years. There had been a significant rise in public awareness of the issue of children and armed conflict, and the scope of international instruments and norms for protecting war-affected children had been significantly expanded. Most regional organizations included war-affected children in their programmes. Mainstreaming of the agenda had taken hold in many institutions and mechanisms, within and outside the United Nations. A major movement for advocacy and monitoring had developed among non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Some major innovations had been introduced, including the deployment of Child Protection Advisers in peacekeeping operations; the establishment of the International Research Network on Children and Armed Conflict; and the practice of submitting to the Security Council an annual list of countries where children were forced to participate in armed conflicts.

3. However, in spite of such progress, the situation on the ground remained grave and unacceptable. Parties in conflict continued to violate with impunity the rights of children in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Indonesian province of Aceh, Iraq, Liberia, the occupied Palestinian territories and northern Uganda. The termination of the protracted conflicts in Angola, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka had put an end to the immediate suffering of children but the tasks of rehabilitation and healing remained daunting. It was hoped that, with the progress being made in the peace negotiations in Kenya, the children of Sudan would soon join the list.

4. The international community was currently faced with a cruel paradox. On the one hand, clear and rigorous standards had been established for the protection of war-affected children and there had been genuine progress, particularly at the international level. On the other hand, atrocities against children were still being committed with impunity on the ground. The key to solving the paradox was a systematic campaign for the "era of application"; no task was more important or urgent for those who wished to put an end to the abominable acts being perpetrated against children in war zones. The campaign for the "era of application" encompassed four key components: advocacy and dissemination; the development of local civil society networks for advocacy and protection; mainstreaming the issues relating to children and armed conflict in the programmes and mechanisms of key institutions; and monitoring and reporting, with a view to taking action.

5. Although the public had become increasingly aware of the plight of war-affected children, a major public awareness and mobilization campaign, utilizing the most effective means of modern communications, would be needed to transform that consciousness into a critical mass of awareness, leading to outright repudiation of the atrocities being committed against children in war situations. The best way to promote local interest and participation and guarantee sustainable initiatives was to develop and strengthen civil society networks for advocacy, protection and monitoring. It was also critical to consolidate the initiatives outlined in sections VI and VII A of the report, which had begun to take hold over the past few years. Monitoring and reporting of violations against children should be carried out in accordance with the standards set forth in section III A of the report; particular attention should be given to the most egregious violations, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the killing of children, sexual violence and abduction.

6. Monitoring and reporting should be carried out by various actors, who would contribute in different areas, depending on their field of expertise, including United Nations country teams, human rights agencies and peacekeeping operations. A coordinated framework establishing effective channels for transmitting reports was needed to ensure effective integration and transmission of information. Reports were useful only if they led to concrete measures on the part of local, regional and international bodies. In that regard, the most important actors were the Security Council; the International Criminal Court; regional organizations;

governments; the Commission on Human Rights; and non-governmental organizations.

7. The Special Representative drew the Committee's attention to an issue which had been a matter of concern since the beginning of the mandate. Activities under the mandate had been funded entirely through voluntary contributions. Although deeply grateful for the donations, he was of the opinion that such contributions were neither an effective nor an efficient way to fund General Assembly-mandated activities. Resource inadequacy and instability had adversely affected activities, staff capacity, recruitment and terms of contracts, not to mention their impact on the integrity and orientation of the mandate. It was hoped that, if the mandate was important to the General Assembly and if it had been delivering the expected results, the General Assembly would assume its responsibility and address the issue.

8. Finally, the Special Representative urged the members of the Committee to acknowledge the self-denial and heroism of the many people who anonymously defended children's rights in truly intolerable circumstances. They were the ones who deserved the support and recognition of the international community.

9. **Ms. Borzi** (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the issue of children and armed conflict was a matter of grave concern. She asked the Special Representative to suggest how the international community might address the issue of armed groups more effectively, so as to ensure compliance with international norms on the use of child soldiers. She wished to know who should be responsible for evaluating the violations of children's rights reported at the national, regional and international levels, and whether progress had been made in mainstreaming issues relating to children and armed conflict within the United Nations.

10. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) regretted that, due to the objection by Israel, the Special Rapporteur had not been able to visit the occupied Palestinian territories during the past six years and hoped that such visits would be possible in the near future. It was urgent that steps should be taken to defend the rights of Palestinian children, as they were subjected daily to acts of violence, including murder, at the hands of the Israeli occupied forces. It was hoped that Mr. Otunnu would be able to inform the Committee of the latest events affecting children in the occupied territories, at the following session. With respect to paragraph 18 of the report (A/58/328), which explained that, in situations where visits had not taken place, "the Special Representative had remained engaged through advocacy, initiatives and monitoring action", she wished to know how he had done that and what the results of such monitoring from a distance had been. Regarding paragraph 3 of the report, she wondered how the resource instability would affect the agenda for action mentioned in paragraphs 70 and 71; she would also like to have further details regarding the agenda's content. The agenda was incomplete because it did not include children under foreign occupation and her delegation doubted its ability to protect children in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation in all parts of the world. Finally, she wished to know what measures should be taken by the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, to assist the Special Representative.

11. **Ms. Mohamed Ahmed** (Sudan) expressed gratitude to Mr. Otunnu for having mentioned the Sudan peacekeeping negotiations, which were being held in Kenya, and for his wishes for their success. Reiterating her country's support for Mr. Otunnu's mission, she wished to know what role the Special Representative had played in advocating the issue of children and armed conflict, and how the issue had been dealt with in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. She also expressed concern at the scarce resources provided to the Office of the Special Representative, which came exclusively from voluntary contributions, and wondered whether Mr. Otunnu could suggest how his Office might find other funds to finance its activities. Finally, with respect to the Special Representative's proposals regarding monitoring and reporting, she wished to know whether there would be an opportunity to exchange opinions and points of view with him on that subject.

12. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda) mentioned that, according to paragraph 18 of the report, the Special Representative was keeping informed of the situation of children in northern and eastern Uganda "through advocacy, initiatives and monitoring action". It was her opinion that the situation in Uganda fully met the criteria for receiving a visit, as outlined in paragraph 17. Given that the Special Representative's mandate had been extended for another three years, she wondered

whether he had made plans to travel to the regions that had not been visited and whether the initiatives planned in order to try to change the situation included something more than advocacy and monitoring, such as personal visits.

13. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), in answer to the question put forward by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union, said that the "era of application" consisted in developing practical policy measures and implementing them in the field. During his visits, the Special Representative did not differentiate between the various parties to a conflict; his practice was to contact all of them, regardless of their legal status, to request their cooperation. The provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibiting the recruitment or use of children in armed conflict did not apply only to Governments and national armies but to rebel movements as well. The Security Council, which had begun the previous year to publish a list of parties to conflicts that continued to violate the rights of children, did not distinguish between State and non-State entities. The mandate of United Nations representatives in the field required that they contact all the parties to a conflict, in order to gather information on measures adopted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1460 (2003). Arms used in conflicts were rarely manufactured in the war zone itself; they usually came from elsewhere. As a result, large networks linking the zones with the outside world had been established, thereby making it possible to exert pressure on States and rebel groups participating in armed conflicts. Very few groups lay outside the sphere of influence of the Security Council, regional groups, neighbouring countries, the General Assembly, the special rapporteurs or the Commission on Human Rights; every possible means should be used to put pressure on such groups and modify their conduct.

14. Regarding the query about who was responsible for reviewing the reports on violations of children's rights, he said that the first step was to establish clear criteria; the second was to establish an order of priority, given that it was impossible to report every violation; the third step was to coordinate the information gathered in the field and use it to prepare reports; and the fourth was to transmit the reports to those responsible for taking measures.

15. With respect to mainstreaming the issue of children and armed conflict in the work of the United Nations system, the Special Representative's report (A/58/328) contained several concrete examples and mentioned various areas of the system which should receive priority attention. Considerable progress had been made in several sectors, including peace and security, although child protection had not yet been institutionalized in the mandate of every United Nations body.

16. Regarding the query from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Special Representative said that, although it was not possible to visit all areas of armed conflict for practical or political reasons, it was still possible to obtain information on them from the United Nations teams working in the field, non-governmental organizations and other civil society institutions. Although the ideal solution would be to combine all the available means, including direct observation of the situation on the ground, that was not always possible.

17. With regard to the questions on resource availability put forward by the Syrian Arab Republic and the Sudan, he said that his Office had been operating under particularly unusual circumstances since the beginning, as it was the only General Assembly mandate funded through voluntary contributions. He was grateful to the donors for their support and generosity but reiterated that the General Assembly should assume its responsibility and ensure the Office's financial stability, if it really considered the issue of children and armed conflict important.

18. In response to the observations by the Sudan, he said that child protection was everyone's responsibility: the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and regional groups. He therefore appealed to all the stakeholders, including those outside the United Nations system, to participate in the era of application described in the report. It was necessary to put ideas into practice and join forces to improve the situation in the field.

19. Regarding the query by the representative of Uganda, the Special Representative referred him to his report and his comments on field visits. The report explained in detail the selection process, the

implementation of visits and the follow-up by United Nations country teams and peacekeeping missions.

20. **Ms. Rasheed** (Permanent Observer of Palestine), referring to the situation of children in Palestine, wondered why the Special Representative had postponed his visit to the occupied Palestinian territories and asked whether the Office intended to make the visit in the future. She also asked the Special Representative to explain what could be done in the meantime to shed light on the steadily deteriorating circumstances in which Palestinian children lived and the grave difficulties that they encountered on a daily basis.

21. **Mr. Amorós Núñez** (Cuba) said that, although the report of the Special Representative (A/58/328) included important recommendations on monitoring and information activities in relation to children and armed conflict, there was no indication of the measures that might be adopted in that regard by the General Assembly and by the Economic and Social Council. For example, neither of those bodies was mentioned in the recommendation in paragraph 76 of the report concerning the network of actors which should make concerted efforts with respect to monitoring and information. He, therefore, asked the Special Representative to recommend specific measures to enable the Assembly and the Council to contribute to activities in that field.

22. **Ms. Khalil** (Egypt) commended the efforts of the Special Representative to draw attention to the question of children and armed conflict in international forums and in civil society. With respect to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories which had been set aside during the previous six years, she asked which monitoring and information activities were envisaged concerning the situation of children, bearing in mind that the Special Representative appeared to have no plans to visit the territories in the immediate future.

23. **Mr. Gzllal** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) shared the concern that had been expressed by other delegations concerning the postponement of the visit by the Special Representative to the occupied Palestinian territories on the grounds that Israel had denied him access, thereby ensuring that nothing was known about the daily suffering of Palestinian children. In his report, the Special Representative had pointed out that, in addition to the thousands of children who were forcibly enlisted throughout the world, in many cases children became involved in armed conflict because of the lack of education, money and employment, factors which also influenced their subsequent rehabilitation. That being so, he asked to what extent the post-conflict physical and mental rehabilitation was possible and what obstacles impeded that work.

24. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), replying to the questions raised, said that the various bodies of the United Nations system tried to share out the work relating to children and armed conflict. Thus, the task of receiving demobilized children and trying to return them to their families was borne by bodies such as UNICEF and other organizations working in the field, together with the relevant non-governmental organizations and other institutions of civil society. His Office was concerned, in particular, with drawing attention to the matter, organizing campaigns in political and diplomatic circles and persuading the parties to stop recruiting children, as had occurred in Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone, and in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the framework of the peace agreements. There was a common factor in those experiences: when problems affecting children in armed conflicts were identified in time, the situation was reversible: the very factors that can make such children malleable and turn them into merciless soldiers also had the opposite effect and could facilitate their recovery. However, when the conflict extended over many years, the children became young adults who had no knowledge of anything other than a life of fighting and death. In the experience of his Office, the capacity of bodies working in the field to receive and rehabilitate children — not only child soldiers but also those who had suffered abuse, displaced children, orphans and, in general, all children who had been affected by war — had no common measure with the requirements or the scale of the problem. Consequently, one of the most urgent tasks was to provide more resources for such activities in the field.

25. Replying to the questions by Palestine, Egypt and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on the occupied Palestinian territories, he said that any visit by him as the Special Representative required the cooperation of the parties to the conflict and of the competent authorities, which had not so far been forthcoming in the case in question. That did not mean that his Office did not remain vigilant. Indeed, if note had been taken

of the horrendous situation in the occupied Palestinian territories over the past year, that was largely thanks to the presence in the field of United Nations bodies and of non-governmental organizations, and to information received from delegations. For his part, although he had not been to Palestine in person, he had been able to obtain a great deal of information which he had found useful, inter alia, in organizing advocacy campaigns.

26. In response to the question asked by Cuba, he said that the recommendations in paragraph 76 of his report (A/58/328) were addressed to all Member States, and consequently, to the General Assembly. The Assembly might incorporate some features of those recommendations in the provisions of the resolution that it would adopt on the agenda item, and he offered his collaboration in that connection. With respect to monitoring and information activities, the General Assembly, in addition to asking for information to be gathered in the field, might intervene decisively in two areas: with respect to monitoring, it might, like the Security Council, request the annual submission of a report on the status of the matter and a list of parties to conflicts that used children as soldiers, attacked schools and prevented children's access to education and to health services. In the second place, the Assembly had sufficient moral authority before world public opinion to take measures on the basis of such information. Thus, on the one hand it had the responsibility to take the initiative and report cases in which the rights of children were violated and, on the other, it could take measures against those who committed abuses. In that connection, he offered his full collaboration to the General Assembly as well as to the Economic and Social Council.

27. **Ms. Groux** (Switzerland) said that her delegation eagerly awaited the report on the effectiveness of the measures adopted by the United Nations system in favour of children affected by armed conflict, as it could give rise to particularly useful recommendations, in particular with regard to resolving the funding problems mentioned by the Special Representative. With regard to the comments made in paragraph 51 of the report (A/58/328) to the effect that systematic efforts had been made to integrate the agenda on children and armed conflict into selected United Nations coordination mechanisms, she wondered why the Special Representative had considered it necessary to use the word "efforts" and also wanted to know what conclusions could be drawn from experience in the field. She would also like to know the Special Representative's views concerning his cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, over and above the exchanges of information mentioned in paragraph 53 of the report.

28. **Ms. Tomič** (Slovenia) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and expressed her appreciation for the work carried out by the Special Representative since the beginning of his first mandate. Her delegation appreciated the suggestions made by the Special Representative concerning monitoring activities. However, she pointed out to the Secretariat that it would have been useful to be given a full assessment of the scope and effectiveness of the activities of the United Nations system concerning the protection of the rights of the child, in particular recommendations on consolidating and continuing such activities and integrating them into general programmes, in order to assist the Committee in its work during the fifty-eighth session. Her delegation had hoped that the assessment would be submitted at the beginning of the session so that the Committee would have been able to use it in its discussions.

29. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin), after thanking the Special Representative for his commitment to the protection of children in armed conflict, said that it would be a useful step to appoint a Special Representative for child victims of trafficking. Most children involved in armed conflict came from poor families and it was poverty that made some parents encourage their children to go to war because they saw it as a source of income for the family. The problem was compounded by the proliferation of weapons, which it was essential to combat in some parts of the world. She would welcome the Special Representative's comments on what action should be taken once conflicts had been extinguished and what measures should be adopted to prevent a resurgence of violence. She would also like to know whether provisions could be adopted at the international, regional and local levels in order to, inter alia, establish zones where the recruitment of children into armed conflict was prohibited and set up courts so that those who had recruited children for war could be convicted.

30. **Mr. Simancas Gutiérrez** (Mexico) endorsed the views of the Special Representative and the representative of Switzerland to the effect that United Nations bodies should complement the work of the

Special Representative in their respective spheres of competence and should also support each other. With regard to direct contacts between the Special Representative and parties to conflicts, he wished to know whether the Special Representative had ever had his neutrality questioned or been accused of favouring a particular party. He also wished to know whether the mandate that had been granted to the Special Representative by the General Assembly was sufficiently clear for him to be able to fulfil his role as impartial and neutral mediator.

31. **Ms. Tariq** (Pakistan) thanked the Special Representative for his dedication to the cause of children affected by armed conflict and said that her country was willing to cooperate fully with him. She agreed that resource instability and inadequacy had affected the integrity and orientation of the Special Representative's work. It was therefore essential for the necessary funding to be provided. She would also like to know the Special Representative's views concerning the implementation of Security Council resolution 1460 (2003) of 30 January 2003, in particular with regard to non-State parties that contravened the resolution in situations of armed conflict and did not consider themselves bound by international treaties, and what measures should be taken in that regard in addition to monitoring and reporting activities.

32. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), responding to the comments made by the representative of Switzerland, said that the use of the word "efforts" in paragraph 51 of the report (A/58/328) had not been intended to suggest that there had been difficulties. The report gave specific examples of measures taken to integrate the issue of children and armed conflict into the work of the United Nations. He stressed that such integration measures were still at a very early stage. It was important to consolidate the gains that had been made in certain areas, for example the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and peacekeeping missions, and at the same time take action in areas in which no work had yet been done.

33. The assessment of the United Nations system response requested by the General Assembly had been delayed owing to a lack of resources and internal capacity; he hoped that the team responsible for carrying out the assessment, which was not part of his Office, would be able to submit it soon. While he understood that delegations preferred to wait until they had received the assessment report, his Office would endeavour to continue the work that had been entrusted to it as effectively as possible so as not to lose momentum. His Office had cooperated directly with the Committee on the Rights of the Child by offering it ideas on how to monitor the situation of children in armed conflict on the basis of country reports and sending it prior information on some countries in order to facilitate coordination. In turn, the Committee had called on national human rights committees to cooperate closely with the Office of the Special Representative. The Committee also played an important role in monitoring and reporting activities, as its consideration of periodic reports enabled it closely to monitor the situation at the national level, ask questions and provide information on progress made. He was also working closely with the Committee's counterpart in Africa in order to strengthen its monitoring and reporting capacity.

34. In response to the query from the representative of Slovenia, the Special Representative pointed out that, although the United Nations was the principal organization responsible for implementing the mandate of his Office, the Organization clearly could not act alone. The United Nations could not achieve the desired objectives without the cooperation of Governments, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society.

35. With respect to the comments made by the representative of Benin, Mr. Otunnu said that, in his reports and statements to the Committee, he had emphasized the need to address not only the symptoms of the problem but also all the factors facilitating the exploitation of children, including poverty. Greater efforts must be made to end the conflicts and also to prevent them from reigniting. Finally, it was imperative to begin enforcing the current legal instruments.

36. Regarding the question from the representative of Mexico, the Special Representative said that impartiality was fundamental; he therefore had made every effort in all the countries that he had visited to act in a transparent and objective manner to show all the parties to conflicts that his sole concern was the children's well-being. In all cases, he had met with each of the parties, with the knowledge of the others; he had asked the same questions and had requested the same commitments. In his opinion, an overly rigid distinction was made between government entities and

rebel groups. It should be remembered that those groups were also political entities and that the international community had many different political, economic and diplomatic means, including public opinion, which could be used to influence them. The international community should not limit itself to enforcing treaties but should adopt a diplomatic and pragmatic perspective to expand possibilities for action and exert influence over all the parties.

37. With respect to the comments made by the representative of Pakistan, the Special Representative pointed out that, if the General Assembly genuinely approved of the results achieved by the Office to date, it should allocate the funds necessary for its work. Member States did not yet appear to fully support the Office and had not allocated sufficient funds to ensure that it had the necessary personnel. The Office was currently operating on a budget of approximately $2.5 million, which was clearly inadequate.

38. **Ms. Adjalova** (Azerbaijan) said that she would like further information regarding the sources used to draw up the list of parties to conflicts that continued to violate the rights of children, which had been submitted to the Security Council. More precisely, she would like to know if the States themselves provided the information or if the Office conducted its own investigations and evaluations. She also wished to know the Special Representative's view on the specific consequences for parties to a conflict if they were cited on the list.

39. **Ms. Nguyen** (Canada) asked what measures should be taken to duly strengthen monitoring and reporting procedures, which, as the Special Representative had pointed out, were essential in order to make the transition to the "era of application".

40. Regarding the comment that the funds allocated to the Office did not match the magnitude of the problem to be tackled, she asked the Special Representative to recommend specific measures that Member States and operational agencies could take to combat violations in the field more effectively.

41. **Mr. Zeidan** (Lebanon) said he understood that the Special Representative had not been able to visit the occupied Palestinian territories for practical, or possibly political, reasons; however, given that non-governmental organizations and other groups had provided him with information on the situation there, he wondered why the Special Representative had merely stated in the report that he had been unable to visit the area, instead of including the available information. He also wished to know how the information on monitoring activities would be submitted, with respect to the children in the territories in particular.

42. **Mr. Konfourou** (Mali) said that it was time to start implementing practical concrete measures, at both the national and international levels, to bring an end to the recruitment of child soldiers and the exploitation of children.

43. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), in response to the query from the representative of Mali, said that many practical measures could be adopted to combat the problem. The Security Council could take measures in various fields, and the International Criminal Court could ensure that alleged war criminals who recruited child soldiers were tried before any others, which would be a powerful element of dissuasion. The Commission on Human Rights and other United Nations human-rights entities could also play an important role. The Special Rapporteurs could use the current norms to advocate the rights of war-affected children, with the support of human rights officials and child protection advisers assigned to peacekeeping missions. Finally, military observers could carry out the important task of gathering information.

44. The Special Representative emphasized the importance of regional cooperation. His Office intended to cooperate with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States-European Union (ACP-EU) Joint Parliamentary Assembly on the preparation of annual reports on the protection of children and armed conflicts. It was also currently cooperating with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) so that the Peer Review Mechanism, which would be adopted by the Community's Heads of State in December, would be implemented in the field of the protection of war-affected children. In addition, his Office was cooperating closely with European Union institutions to develop guidelines for the reports which could be drawn up by representatives of the European Union member States in war-affected countries. Accountability mechanisms needed to be established so that parties to conflicts would realize that the international community was on the alert. It was fundamental that all institutions concerned, particularly

the regional organizations, contribute to that effort. The Special Representative urged the members of the Committee to put forward their ideas on possible modalities for monitoring and reporting.

45. Regarding the observations by the representatives of Lebanon and Azerbaijan, the Special Representative said that he had hoped to visit the occupied Palestinian territories and had received information from non-governmental organizations and United Nations teams working there, both of which were vital sources. The report on violators would be made available to the Committee as an official United Nations document. There were organizations in the territories that could both implement the measures required to strengthen monitoring and submit reports. The measures should be adopted systematically and violators must be brought to trial. There was no possible negotiation on that point.

46. **Ms. Pia-Comella** (Andorra) said that it was clear from the resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and of the Economic and Social Council that the situation of children in many countries and regions of the world continued to be critical. The rights of the child were human rights and nothing could justify exploitative child labour, the sexual exploitation of children or the recruitment of children as soldiers.

47. Andorra's support for the rights of the child was not limited to its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. Its contribution was also reflected in the aid it provided for development and humanitarian assistance: over 90 per cent of the development assistance programmes in which Andorra participated were aimed at improving children's living conditions.

48. Education, in particular for girls, was essential to breaking the poverty cycle. By education she meant not only that received at school, but also the promotion of a culture of peace, which was fundamental to reducing the involvement of children in armed conflict. The rights of the child must also be respected in cases where humanitarian assistance was needed. In the case of Iraq, Andorra's contributions focused on Iraqi children. She praised the World Food Programme and UNICEF for their efforts to improve the future of children.

49. **Mr. Smagulov** (Kazakhstan) welcomed the enlargement of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as such action was important to stepping up coordination among United Nations bodies and thereby promoting those rights. According to his country's Constitution, childcare was a fundamental responsibility of parents and the family. In Kazakhstan, laws had been passed to provide protection for orphans in special homes; today there were five centres for children and 14 for young people. Laws had also been passed to eradicate child labour. The Penal Code prohibited the abuse of women and girls, and the Government had set up centres for women and girls who were victims of violence.

50. Kazakhstan had received a grant from the Asian Development Bank to set up programmes to combat anaemia and other illnesses caused by iron deficiency. Such illnesses were characteristic of girls in some parts of the country. Maternity hospitals had received equipment designed to help them reduce maternal and infant mortality, and measures had been taken to improve the access of children and pregnant women to health services. The Parliament was examining a bill on human rights in relation to reproductive health.

51. Special programmes had been adopted in schools to prevent violence. Boys and girls needed to know from a young age that they had equal rights and opportunities. Moreover, various programmes were being carried out to raise awareness of gender issues among health workers and teachers. Kazakhstan maintained its commitment to continue cooperating at the international level in order to ensure the well-being of children.

52. **Ms. Tariq** (Pakistan) said that, despite all the conventions, covenants, instruments and declarations on human rights, the plight of children all over the world was still being ignored and children were not getting the attention they deserved. Pakistan was proud to have been one of the six countries that had first promoted the principle of a "first call for children", which had culminated in the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The 1990 World Summit for Children had strongly endorsed the Convention and adopted a progressive Plan of Action which attached great importance to the rights of the child at the international level. Regrettably, 10 years after the adoption of the Convention, the situation of children all over the world was still appalling. Millions of children were victims of sexual exploitation,

exploitative child labour, abuse, violence and trafficking. Many millions more died as a direct result of armed conflict and lack of medical attention.

53. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognized that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of love and understanding. The responsibilities and role of parents and the family were fully integrated into the rights of the child and firmly enshrined in the Convention. Parents and the family were the natural custodians of the interests and well-being of the child, and the protection and promotion of the rights of the child therefore began at home. The institution of the family needed to be strengthened at the national and international levels in order to provide a healthy environment for the growth and well-being of children.

54. The full realization of the rights of the child would remain a pipe dream unless the poverty, deprivation and impoverishment of underprivileged segments of society were addressed effectively. Political and economic empowerment of all people was necessary in order to create a society where rights were respected and promoted. Accordingly, a comprehensive plan of good governance, participatory democracy, sustainable economic growth and human development had been put into place in Pakistan, with women as equal stakeholders.

55. Pakistan believed that the child was a fundamental element in its human development agenda and that children's issues fell within the framework of human rights and human development. The National Perspective Plan 2002-2012 focused on four areas: free access to universal primary education, especially for girls; the reduction of the infant mortality rate with the help of the World Health Organization and UNICEF; the elimination of child labour by 2005 with the help of the International Labour Organization; and the endorsement and enforcement of international instruments, including a review of legislation relating to children.

56. Pakistan had been among the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had also signed its two Optional Protocols. Moreover, in an effort to completely eliminate child labour, it had taken a significant step by ratifying ILO Convention 182. Pakistan was now a proud signatory to all child-related treaties, the spirit of which would further strengthen Pakistan's resolve and endeavours in the area of protecting and promoting the rights of the child. The Government was fully committed to the welfare and development of children, and all possible efforts were being made to formulate and implement relevant policies in cooperation with United Nations agencies, international development organizations, non-governmental organizations, public-private partnerships and the private sector.

57. **Mr. Jong** Myong Hak (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that children continued to be the victims of various kinds of abuse and rights violations, in spite of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the commitments undertaken at the special session of the General Assembly. The number of people living in extreme poverty was increasing continually, and more than half of those were children; at the same time, global wealth continued to accumulate in the hands of a few. Children were the most vulnerable group in situations of armed conflict and often became the innocent victims of immoral and merciless acts committed by foreign occupying forces.

58. Children were the future of mankind; indeed, the existence of each country and of the world depended on the protection and nurturing of children. In order to ensure their survival and well-being, it was necessary to develop a policy prioritizing child protection issues and to establish a viable mechanism for its implementation. There was a need to raise public awareness of children's rights and give priority to investments for improving their access to health services and education. It was especially important to improve the quality and methods of education. New generations should learn not only about the history of their own country but also about world history and other cultures and traditions. It was criminal to imbue young people with corrupt culture, teach them a distorted version of history and instil hatred for other nations. A peaceful and stable world could not be built unless young people appreciated the value of friendship and harmony among all countries and nations. It was essential to join forces and establish an international environment that would foster the survival, protection and advancement of children.

59. Military occupation and sanctions hindered the exercise of the right to development of countries and gravely affected the survival and advancement of children. Occupying forces who committed atrocities

against children should be condemned and punished. Deliberations on the use of sanctions should take into account their potential impact on children, and measures should be taken to prevent that possibility.

60. International organizations and donor countries needed to allocate more funds to activities guaranteeing the survival and protection of children and should help States parties implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was grateful to the international organizations, particularly the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for their material and technical assistance in the promotion and protection of children's rights in that country. In spite of more than 50 years of difficulties and external pressure, his country had granted various privileges and special benefits to children. The Government had continually maintained its child-welfare policy, which included free medical care and education, and was currently focusing on improving legal and social conditions so that children's rights would be fully realized.

61. **Mr. Kiandee** (Malaysia) said it was encouraging that 192 countries had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was undoubtedly the most universal of all the international conventions, as it reflected the world's concern for and commitment to the well-being of children. Malaysia had been party to the Convention since 1995 and was currently in the process of acceding to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It was firmly committed to adhering to the Convention and other relevant instruments and to implementing programmes for the promotion and protection of children's rights.

62. Malaysia's Second National Plan of Action for Children, which had been adopted in 2000 for the 2001-2020 period, had been formulated to adapt to circumstances as they evolved, and had taken into account the conclusions reached during consultations with children at various levels. The Plan outlined measures and programmes aimed at steering the country to achieve the status of a developed nation. In conformity with the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Plan was designed to provide greater opportunities and facilities in the fields of health and education; strengthen the role of parents and the family; promote child protection and care; and encourage the enactment and enforcement of specific laws, particularly the Child Act 2001. Special attention had been given to disabled children, so that they would receive the education and special care needed to live a full and productive life, in dignity, and with the greatest degree of self-reliance and social integration. Under the Child Act 2001, the Juvenile Court had been replaced by a Court for Children, where the child concerned could participate in court deliberations.

63. Malaysia recognized that advances in information and communications technologies would inevitably produce changes and problems and would have an impact on the intellectual development, social behaviour, values and cultural enrichment of children. The Plan of Action had introduced measures to guide and protect Malaysian children so that they would not be adversely affected by the technological revolution. The Government had also embarked on a project to build computer laboratories in all Malaysian schools.

64. To protect children against abuse, Malaysia had set up protection and rehabilitation mechanisms, including intersectoral Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect teams at district and state hospitals and a 24-hour toll-free hotline where suspected child abuse cases could be reported. As a preventive measure, the Government had established child protection teams in all states, which, inter alia, provided psychological counselling and other services. In line with the "shared responsibility" concept initiated by the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development, the Government was working closely with members of civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations and voluntary organizations, to further enhance measures to promote and protect children's rights.

65. The aforementioned initiatives were among the measures aimed at protecting and nurturing children, so that they would become responsible and productive members of society. The Government was cooperating with the private sector and NGOs to explore other possibilities and was taking into account practices from around the world, while preserving Malaysia's own values and its national political, social and economic agenda.

66. The representative of Malaysia commended the Special Representative for his untiring efforts to place

children on the international peace and security agenda; incorporate the principle of child protection into peace agreements and peacekeeping operations; encourage the introduction of the principle of child protection in many related instruments, tribunals and procedures; and obtain the cooperation of non-governmental organizations. However, it was regrettable that such efforts had not significantly reduced the victimization of children in armed conflict; in fact, the situation of children in war zones remained grave and precarious. It was clear that much remained to be done to protect children in armed conflicts. In that regard, his delegation supported the various recommendations put forward by the Special Representative in his report. Malaysia urged Governments to take firmer action against all parties directly or indirectly involved in using children in armed conflicts. It was hoped that the Special Representative would seriously address the issue of children under foreign occupation in the occupied Palestinian territories and that he would be able to visit the area to determine the situation and report his findings to the General Assembly.

*The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.*